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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MOPS](#) [UK](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NAD ALI-MARJA STABILIZATION PLANNING: MOVING
FORWARD

REF: A. (A) KABUL 3286
[1](#)B. (B) KABUL 2940

Classified By: CDDEA Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne, for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) Summary: UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Lashkar Gah hosted a Marja stabilization civ-mil planning conference on December 16, with members of Task Force Helmand (TFH), Task Force Leatherneck (TFL) and RC-South. This was a complete review of the previous stabilization program drafted in August, giving all parties an opportunity to update and examine the stabilization plan. All agreed that Helmand Governor Mangal should play the key GIROA role coordinating Helmand resources, and that he would require credible political support from Kabul to implement a successful stabilization effort in the wake of the February operations. PRT development officers had detailed talks with the Task Force planners and agreed to meet regularly to coordinate ground and air logistic support to implement development programs. Central Afghan government support remains a question, and strong engagement from RC-South and the Kabul missions will be required to push the GIROA central ministries to provide enough security and government personnel to support the effort. The Marja stabilization program is a significant challenge, but the PRT staff has worked on this program for some time and is coordinating closely with the various ISAF elements and the Provincial Afghan leadership to implement a strong program. End Summary.

The Stabilization Plan

[1](#)2. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) The UK-led PRT in Lashkar Gah, Helmand hosted a day-long Nad Ali-Marja stabilization planning meeting on December 16, attended by civ-mil planners from TFH, TFL and RC-South. The stabilization plan for the Marja area was originally drawn up in August and was extensively reviewed and adjusted by TFH and TFL; much of the current work involves updating this plan in advance of operations in early February. PRT development, education, health, justice and governance officers presented their updated efforts and held detailed talks with the planners to address possible logistical support and de-conflict program support. The discussions confirmed the wide base of financial, personnel and material support that is ready for deployment to an initial stabilization effort and to sustain that effort for some time. PRT officers have excellent working relationships with provincial officials and are convinced they and their provincial partners can deliver a complete stabilization program with the resources available to them.

[1](#)3. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) The most consistent concern raised during the discussions was that there would be little support

from GIROA ministries in Kabul to sustain efforts in Nad Ali-Marja, as has been the case in other areas. Representatives from RC-South said they would work with their leadership to try to gain support from Kabul with the help of Embassy and ISAF leadership. Nad Ali is also one of the priority districts of the District Delivery Program (DDP), which if implemented as currently planned should be a useful mechanism for bringing added support from the ministries in Kabul (see reftels). The PRT officers will continue to work with TFH and TFL planners to refine their plans and coordinate these efforts with provincial officials to ensure a successful effort.

Nad Ali-Marja Coordination) Tough but Doable

¶4. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) PRT Lashkar Gah has implemented and maintained seven stabilization programs over the last two years, but the upcoming Nad Ali-Marja stabilization program presents several particular challenges. The area itself is located close to the Provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, but TFH (UK) and TFL (U.S.) each control different sections of the district. This requires the PRT staff to coordinate with two leadership elements. Also, Marja is legally part of the Nad Ali district, but is physically separated from North Nad Ali and has a separate population center. The current District Governor of Nad Ali is very active, has established a District Council, and works well with the PRT and Governor Mangal, but has no presence in the Marja area of Nad Ali. To resolve this challenge, Governor Mangal has appointed a Deputy District Governor (DDG) for Marja and wants to establish a sub-district government office in the Marja area.

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Mangal believes this will allow the local community to have regular access to their government and also will allow TFL to coordinate their efforts with a GIROA leadership team on the ground. This Marja DDG will solve an immediate coordination problem but will complicate the local governance setup and place an extra managerial burden on Governor Mangal.

Drugs and Cops

¶5. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) Nad Ali-Marja has an extensive narcotic industry; any stabilization effort in the area will have to address this challenge, including the strong potential for corrupting influences on the Afghan Security Forces. Mangal wants to deliver Governor Led Eradication (GLE) into all the districts of Helmand; which could place an additional drain on the Afghan Police. Such a step also raises concern among the military that an eradication program will anger the local community. PRT counter-narcotic officers have worked closely with Mangal, distributing free wheat seed and fertilizer to more than 40,000 Helmand farmers. This program included a strong public information campaign that told poppy farmers, including those in Nad Ali-Marja, they would face eradication by the GLE. Mangal seems determined to implement GLE in the widest possible area; this will require close coordination with TFH and TFL to obtain clear assessments if the Nad Ali-Marja area is secure enough to allow the lightly protected GLE to operate safely.

¶6. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) Because of the revenue generated from the narcotics industry, the local police in the Nad Ali-Marja area have long acted more as a private militia than a law enforcement body. The planning group agrees that no local police should be used and units from the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) must be brought in for the stabilization effort and remain until new police units can be trained and based in the area. ANCOP units have worked well in Helmand, and they have been well received by the local population and area leadership. The reintroduction of local police into the area cannot be rushed. A robust mentoring package will be required to supervise any local

Afghan police force.

Comment

¶7. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) The civ-mil stabilization plan for Nad Ali-Marja is well advanced and is being quickly finalized. TFH, TFL, and RC-South are fully involved in the process. The PRT is leading this effort and coordinating with the provincial and district officials. The local community has expressed strong support for the removal of the insurgent elements; many have a positive association with development efforts that are available from the international community and the provincial government. An agreed counter narcotics strategy still must be finalized. Careful training and mentoring of the Afghan police also will be needed to sustain security in the area. Many of the stabilization challenges will be managed on a day-to-day basis by the PRT and their GIROA counterparts at the Provincial and District levels.

¶8. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) From the PRT's perspective, political interference (or neglect) from Kabul presents a real challenge to any stabilization program for Nad Ali-Marja. The Embassy intends, as does the UK and ISAF missions, to strongly encourage Karzai to be positively engaged. (NB: COMISAF intends to visit other locations in the province with Karzai soon.) The former Helmand Governor, Sher Mohammed Akunzada (SMA), and former Helmand Chief of Police, Abdul Rahman Jon (ARJ), enjoy direct access to Karzai and have significant ties to the narcotics industry located in the area. These actors have regularly worked to destabilize the Mangal provincial administration, among other things using false civilian casualty incidents to undermine ongoing stabilization efforts in Helmand.

¶9. (C/Rel US, ISAF, NATO) The Embassy will work with the UK mission and ISAF to seek a strong public statement of support from Karzai for Mangal's stabilization program and press for actions to deter the unofficial powerbrokers from interfering in this already complicated effort. If a strong public endorsement from Karzai is not forthcoming, it will give a green light to the local strongmen to resist efforts to stabilize the cleared Nad Ali-Marja areas and this would set back efforts to expand security and governance across Central Helmand. In addition to seeking a strong, public

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presidential endorsement, the Embassy will press for the active and coordinated involvement of relevant ministries. If central government support fails to materialize, ISAF will undoubtedly achieve a tactical success, but we could fall short of linking all of central Helmand into one unbroken economic development corridor: an extremely valuable objective.

¶10. (U) This message was drafted by the Helmand PRT in Lashkar Gah and Embassy Kabul.
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